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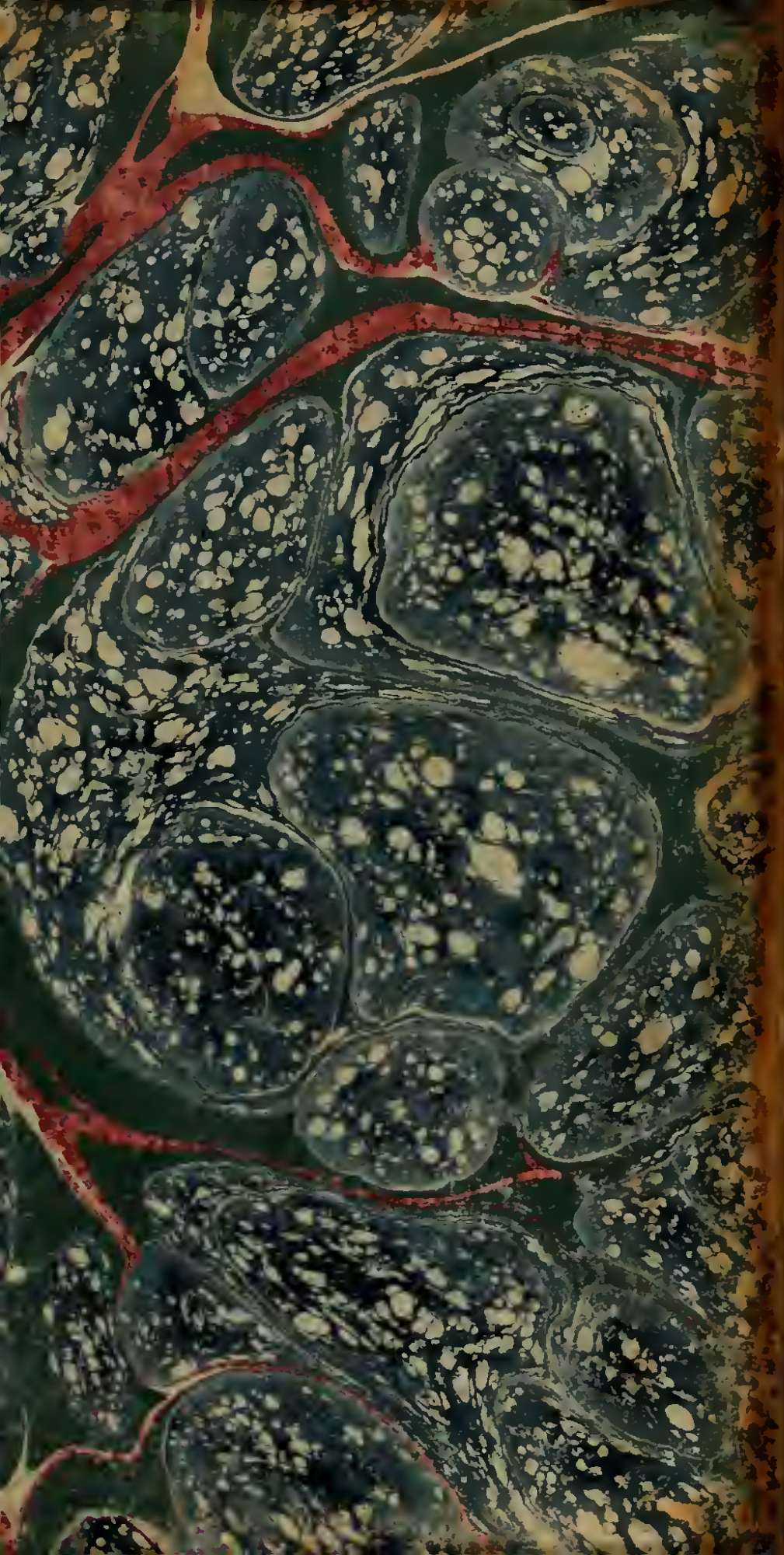

CHEERFUL PIETY;

OR,

RELIGION WITHOUT GLOOM.

Exemplified in

SELECT LETTERS,

Written on the most interesting

TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

By the late Rev. JOHN BERRIDGE, A.M.

With original Anecdotes of his Life & Death.

SIXTH EDITION.

With occasional Notes & Illustrations,

By G. WRIGHT, Esq.

AUTHOR OF PLEASING MELANCHOLY, &c.

Be seriously chearful, and chearfully serious.
Religion never was design'd
To make our pleasures less.....WATTS.

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1812.

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Troy June 1823

ORIGINAL ANECDOTES

OF THE LATE

Rev. JOHN BERRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF THE ENSUING LETTERS.

THE Rev. John Berridge was born in 1716, at Kingston, in Nottinghamshire. In the 15th year of his age he was convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and the necessity of being born again, not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

He was sent to the university at Cambridge in the 19th year of his age, and in 1749 began his ministry at Stapleford near Cambridge; where he preached for several years with zeal and faithfulness, but with little success. In 1755 he was admitted to the

vicarage of Everton in Bedfordshire, where he continued till his death.

From his own memorandums found among his papers since his decease, it appears he was a stranger to that faith which purifies the heart, works by love, and makes Christ all in all to the believing soul, till the year 1757; and therefore went about preaching up the righteousness of the creature, instead of the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, for acceptance with God.*

In the following year it pleased the Lord of his infinite mercy to open the eyes of his mind, to see his error, and make him to cry out, "Lord, if I am right, keep me so; but if I am not, make me so"

A few days after this, his earnest and constant prayer was granted, he was led by the blessed Spirit to ac-

* This made it no wonder that his ministrations were no more blest to the souls of others than his own.

knowledge the insufficiency of good works to merit the divine favour, and accordingly renounced them;* he was taught the necessity of believing in the dear Redeemer alone for life and salvation, and joyfully received and depended on him, as the only Saviour from the wrath to come; agreeable to the declaration of an inspired apostle, Acts iv. 12. *Neither is salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

From this time he truly found his preaching *was not in vain in the Lord;* for he had many bright and eminent seals added to his ministry, which were his joy in life, and shall doubtless be his crown of rejoicing when time shall be no more. Among these was the Rev. Mr Hicks, a clergyman of Wrestlingworth, about four miles from Everton, who became a very use-

* In point of dependence, as anywise meritorious in the sight of God.

ful man, and often accompanied him in his itinerant labours from place to place.*

A few years before the Rev. Mr. Whitefield died, Mr. B came to preach at the tabernacle in Moorfields, and continued to do so annually till 1793; he intended to have come the beginning of that year, and was expected by his numerous friends both at Moorfields and at Tottenham-court; but they were mournfully disappointed, by receiving the melancholy tidings of his disease. On the 20th of January he came down into his parlor as usual, but through increasing weakness and debility, with great difficulty reached his chamber in the evening.

* A few months after Mr. B was called out of (what may not improperly be styled) *Arminian* darkness, into the *Calvinistic* light of the Gospel, he saw it his duty to itinerate, or to extend, the sphere of his usefulness by becoming a *travelling* preacher; emboldened by the success the late Rev. G. Whitefield and his lay preachers, met with in their itinerant labours.

Some little time after he went to bed, he appeared to be struck with death; his face was contracted, and his speech faultered; and in this situation he continued till about three o'clock on Tuesday morning, when he calmly entered into the joy of his Lord, in the *seventy-sixth* year of his age.

On the following sabbath his remains were interred in his own parish church-yard, attended by weeping thousands, who truly loved his living, and sincerely mourn his loss. The Rev. Mr. Simeon, a pious clergyman of Cambridge, preached his funeral sermon from 2 Timothy iv. 7, 8. to a very numerous and deeply affected congregation.

May the great Lord of the harvest, while he sees fit to remove such bright and shining lights in the church, send forth more such faithful labourers into the harvest! for the harvest is truly great, but such faithful and eminent labourers are but few. G. W.

AN EPITAPH

INSCRIBED ON HIS TOMBSTONE.

Here lie
The earthly remains of
JOHN BERRIDGE,
Late Vicar of Everton,
And an itinerant servant of *Jesus Christ*,
Who loved his Master and his work;
And, after running on his errands many years,
Was caught up to wait on him above.
Reader!
Art thou born again?
No salvation without a new birth.
I was born in sin, Feb. 1716,
Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730;
Lived proudly on faith and works for salvation till 1754;
Admitted to Everton vicarage 1755;
Fled to *Jesus* alone for refuge 1756;
Fell asleep in *Christ* Jan. 22, 1793.

AN INTERVIEW

With the late Rev. Mr. Berridge.

ABOUT two years ago, a friend of mine wishing to enjoy an hour or two of Mr. B.'s company, rode over to Everton for that purpose. He was introduced by a dissenting minister in the neighbourhood, with whom Mr. B lived upon terms of friendship. When seated, my friend requested Mr B if agreeable, to favour them with a few outlines of his life. The venerable old man began, and related several things, as narrated in the first number of the Evangelical Magazine. But as some are there unnoticed, I have selected the following, which I think will not be uninteresting.

"Soon after I began," said he, "to preach the Gospel of Christ at Everton, the church was filled from the villages around us, and the neighbouring clergy felt themselves hurt at their churches being deserted. The 'squire

of my own parish, too, was much offended. He did not like to see so many strangers, and to be so incommoded. Between them both it was resolved, if possible, to turn me out of my living. For this purpose they complained of me to the bishop of the diocese, that I had preached out of my own parish. I was soon after sent for by the bishop; I did not much like my errand, but I went.

"When I arrived, the bishop accosted me in a very abrupt manner: 'Well, Berridge, they tell me you go about preaching out of your own parish? Did I institute you to the livings of A—y, or E—n, or P—n?'—'No, my lord,' said I, 'neither do I claim any of these livings; the clergymen enjoy them undisturbed by me'—'Well, but you go and preach there, which you have no right to do.' 'It is true, my lord, I was one day at E—n, and there were a few poor people assembled together, and I admon-

ished them to repent of their sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; and I remember seeing five or six clergymen that day, my lord, all out of their own parishes, upon E—n bowling-green.'—'Poh!' said his lordship, 'I tell you, you have no right to preach out of your own parish; and if you do not desist from it, you will very likely be sent to Huntingdon gaol'—'As to that, my lord,' said I, 'I have no greater liking to Huntingdon gaol, than other people; but I had rather go thither with a good conscience, than live at my liberty without one.'

"Here his lordship looked very hard at me, and very gravely assured me, 'that I was beside myself, and that in a few months' time I should either be better or worse'—'Then,' said I, 'my lord, you may make yourself quite happy in this business, for if I should be better, you suppose I shall desist from this practice of my own accord;

and, if worse, you need not send me to Huntingdon gaol, as I shall be provided with an accommodation in Bedlam.'

"His lordship now changed his mode of attack. Instead of threatening, he began to entreat: 'Berridge,' said he, 'you know I have been your friend, and I wish to be so still. I am continually teazed with the complaints of the clergymen around you. Only assure me that you will keep to your own parish; you may do as you please there. I have but little time to live; do not bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"At this instant two gentlemen were announced, who desired to speak with his lordship. 'Berridge,' said he, go to your inn, and come again at such an hour, and dine with me.' I went, and on entering a private room, fell immediately upon my knees. I could bear threatening, but knew not how to withstand entreaty; especially the en-

treaty of a respectable old man. At the appointed time I returned. At dinner I was treated with great respect. The two gentlemen also dined with us. I found they had been informed who I was, as they sometimes cast their eyes towards me in some such manner as one would glance at a monster. After dinner his lordship took me into the garden. 'Well, Berridge,' said he, 'have you considered of my request?'—'I have, my lord,' said I, 'and have been upon my knees concerning it.'—'Well, and will you promise me that you will preach no more out of your own parish?'—'It would afford me great pleasure,' said I, 'to comply with your lordship's request, if I could do it with a good conscience I am satisfied, the Lord has blessed my labours of this kind, and I dare not desist'—'A good conscience!' said his lordship; 'do you not know that it is contrary to the canons of the church?'—'There is one

canon, my lord,' I replied, 'which saith, *Go, preach the gospel to* EVERY CREATURE.'—'But why should you wish to interfere with the charge of other men? one man cannot preach the gospel to all men.'—'If they would preach the gospel themselves,' said I, 'there would be no need for my preaching it to their people; but as they do not, I cannot desist.' His lordship then parted with me in some displeasure. I returned home, not knowing what would befal me; but thankful to God that I had preserved a conscience void of offence.

"I took no measures for my own preservation, but Divine Providence wrought for me in a way that I never expected. When I was at Clare-Hall, I was particularly acquainted with a fellow of that college; and we were both upon terms of intimacy with Mr. Pitt, the late lord Chatham, who was at that time also at the university.

"This fellow of Clare-hall, when I began to preach the gospel, became my enemy, and did me some injury in some ecclesiastical privileges which before time I had enjoyed. At length, however, when he heard that I was likely to come into trouble, and to be turned out of my living at Everton, his heart relented. He began to think, it seems, within himself, we shall ruin this poor fellow among us. This was just about the time I was sent for by the bishop. Of his own accord he writes a letter to Mr. Pitt, saying nothing about my methodism, but to this effect: 'Our old friend Berridge has got a living at Bedfordshire, and, I am informed he has a 'squire in his parish that gives him a deal of trouble; has accused him to the bishop of the diocese, and, it is said, will turn him out of the living; I wish you could contrive to put a stop to these proceedings.' Mr. Pitt was at that time a

young man, and not chusing to apply to the bishop himself, spoke to a certain nobleman, to whom the bishop was indebted for his promotion. This nobleman, within a few days, made it his business to see the bishop, who was then in London.

'My lord,' said he, 'I am informed you have a very honest fellow, one Berridge, in your diocese, and that he has been ill-treated by a litigious 'squire that lives in his parish. He has accused him, I am told, to your lordship, and wishes to turn him out of his living. You would oblige me, my lord, if you would take no notice of that 'squire, and not suffer the honest man to be interrupted in his living.' The bishop was astonished, and could not imagine in what manner things could have thus got round: It would not do, however, to object; he was obliged to bow compliance, and so I continued

ever after in my sphere of action."*

After this interesting narration was ended, which had alternately drawn smiles and tears from my friend and his companion, they requested him to pray with them, one five minutes before they departed: "No," said the good old man to my friend, "you shall pray with me."—"Well, but if I begin, perhaps you will conclude." He consented. After my friend had ended, he, without rising from his knees, took up his petitions; and with such sweet solemnity, such holy familiarity with God, and such ardent love to Christ, poured out his soul, that the like was seldom seen. They

* The 'squire having waited on the bishop, to know the result of the summons, had the mortification to learn that his purpose was defeated. On his return home, his partizans in this prosecution fled to know what was determined on, saying, "Well, have you got the old devil out?" He replied, "No, nor do I think the very devil himself can get him out!"

parted; and my fried declares, he thinks he shall never forget the favour of the interview to his dying day.

J. SUTCLIFFE.

CHEERFUL PIETY,

OR,

RELIGION WITHOUT GLOOM.

LETTER I.

To the Rev. Mr. B.

DEAR FRIEND,

WITH a melancholy pleasure, and at the same time self-abasement, I heard your lectures on man's heart, as fallen by original apostacy and the dreadful epidemical disease of sin, which has spread itself over the whole soul.* When you dissected and anatomised the heart of man as before and after conversion, you went into

* Isaiah i. 5, 6.

the private closet of *my* heart,* and the under-ground vaults, where you have dug up some of the bones of the old man, that have long lain rotting there.

Here is the general exchange for corruption :† here the world and the devil often meet together ; here they correspond, trade, and traffic ; and Satan well knows this is the best place for vending his contraband goods, having so many friends that court the heart, and recommend his wares, viz. *vain thoughts*, *worldly imaginations*, *evil and impure sensations*, *earthly affections*, *inordinate desires*, *ambitious views*, *high-mindedness*, *riches*, *and sinful pleasures;* or pharasaical righteousness, moral confidence, unscriptural hopes, formal sanctity, uncovenanted mercy, &c.

Satan takes a turn round these walks, and pays his compliments (if

* As face answereth to face in a glass, so does the experience of one real Christian to another. † Mark vii. 21.

I may so say) to the inmates of my soul, who are his good friends every day, aye, every *hour;* he tries always to find out the *constitutional* sin, or what the apostle calls my most easy besetting sin.* He has baits for all sorts of corruptions, and he endeavors to time his assaults. Sometimes he bids good-morrow to one lust or corruption, sometimes to another, and so makes his cruel visits from one place of the soul to another all day long, and never bids good night; for even when I go to bed he lies down with me, and sometimes in my sleep he haunts and awakes me.

If I go into my closet, in order to lock myself up from the busy world, this impertinent intruder, the devil, will break in there too, without asking me leave; and so in the family, and even in the sanctuary, the house of God, I am dogged by this roaring lion.† Sometimes he snatches the preached

* Heb. xii. 1. † 1 Pet. v. 8. Rom. vii. 21.

word from me in a way of *forgetfulness;* sometimes presents other objects to my view, and sometimes would have me make an ill use of it, by misapplying. Sometimes I pray as if I was praying to a wooden god, without a proper sense of his divinity and omniscience, and so only *word* it with God. By the way, I would not charge the devil with more than his just due; for I know my own corrupt heart sometimes invites Satan to come in, and has often entertained and bid him welcome.*

Oh, how ought I to be humbled, that I have so often fetched a chair for Satan the tempter to sit down in, while he has entertained himself upon the lusts and affections of my soul! and has he not had the insolence sometimes to tempt me to sin from the aboundings of grace? O horrid injection! And sometimes such cogitations have worked upon the imagi-

* Alas! how often do even the best of Christians tempt the devil to tempt them!

nation and the heart in and under ordinances. What power Satan's temptations have had, and how often the seeds of sin have sprung up, and blossomed, and budded, and brought forth fruit, to my sorrow as well as shame, I cannot express; but I would open the matter with soul abasement to the eye of him that looks down into my heart, and sees all the workings of iniquity within me.

Respecting what you are now upon, it is pleasing to find experience answers experience, as face to face in a glass.*—There is a prodigious alliance formed by the empire of hell, the god of this world, and by unbelief, with all its train of sins, in the heart of every natural man, and the unrenewed part in every true believer;—this is the threefold cord that is not easily broken; this is the grand alliance. Sir, thus the case stands; and on these accounts my soul has often bled; afraid of myself, afraid of the devil,

* Prov. xxvii. 19.

afraid of every one, and sometimes afraid even of my God.* I have sometimes had hopes that grace had enthroned itself in my heart, and I have had, as it were, a cessation from corruption; at least, in some branches, the war has seemed to be at an end almost, and I have often sung a funeral song of victory over (as I thought) a *dead* corruption; but Satan has called up all his forces, and fired again, and with his fireballs has set the whole city of my soul into a flame, and there has been a resurrection of the monster sin again.

Oh, pity me, all you combatants in the field of battle! that know the force of temptation, and are haunted, as I am, with these ghosts continually. The devil sometimes gets me down and buffets me with the sin that most easily besets me, and then turns accuser, and brings railing accusations against me; and if he cannot keep me from a throne of grace, he makes me

* Job xxiii. 15, 16.

go limping and halting there, afraid to open my mouth; and sometimes I can only hold up my hand at the bar, and cry, guilty! guilty!

And now, Sir, let me ask you, is this balm in Gilead for an old stinking sore, as well as for a constant running one? a sore that I thought had been healed long ago, but breaks out again with its bloody issue. Is there a physician? what, for such a nauseous, defiled, stinking, as well as weak and sin-sick, soul as mine? I truly need a physician *within* as well as *without*. Christ, and his blood and righteousness, to justify and acquit, and the blessed spirit to sanctify and cure the inward diseases of my soul; for what would it avail a condemned malefactor, to be pardoned and acquitted of his crimes. if he had the jail distemper upon him, and was to die by it?*

* The real Christian desires to be freed from the *love* and *power* of sin, as well as from the *guilt*, *condemnation*, and *punishment*, due it.

Indeed God never justifies but he sanctifies. Election is God's mark to know his own children by. Calling and sanctification are our marks,* by which we come to know that we ourselves are his elected children. Oh then set forth the work of the spirit in a rebellious will, a blind understanding, a hard heart, a stupid conscience and vile affections; renewing and sanctifying all these powers, and so proving it to be truly the work of God and not of man This gospel sanctification I need and earnestly desire; and if you could help me in the present prospect, of the eye of Christ scanning the hidden parts of man, it would be doing a good piece of service, not only to me, but perhaps to many others who may be in the same case.

Dear Sir, may you be helped to lay open the inward powers of the soul and the deceitful arts of the body, for

* Not of our own procuring, but the work of God's love, grace, and spirit, on the soul.

the alarming and rousing the stupid and careless, and for the search and inquiry of every real Christian, both with regard to the principle, growth, and activity, of grace, or the decays and witherings of it; what interest God has in the heart, and how much sin and Satan have;* what advances heaven-ward, or what loitering, backslidings, or falls, there are found too often in the way to glory.†

I am, dear Friend, your's, &c.

* There is no heart so perfectly renewed by the grace of God, but has and will have, as long as it is on this side the grave, more or less of inward corruption. This made the apostle Paul groan, being burdened, and to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

† Some Christians find many more stumbling-blocks in their way than others; but all have their trials, temptations, and hindrances, of one kind or another, either from sin, Satan, and the world, or their own deceitful hearts; which should excite them constantly to watch and pray, that they may

LETTER II.

To the Rev. Mr. B.

DEAR FRIEND,

I PERCEIVE, by some hints in a late discourse, the rough draught of the portrait of my soul has reached your hands; the lines perhaps were strong in many parts, but yet imperfect. This I call its fellow; but, alas! were I to write whole volumes upon the subject, they would still be but small sketches.

To anatomise my own soul, and point out the irregular turnings and windings of a deceitful heart, is beyond my skill.* Satan is always beating and hunting the powers of my soul; watching what will start next, whether *pride*, *sensuality*, *covetousness*,

be enabled to press forward in spite of all opposition, and at last come off as *more* than conquerors through Him that hath loved them.

* Well might the prophet say, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?* Jer. xvii. 9.

worldly pleasures, &c ; and whatever sins they are, he will be sure to strike in and follow. How often has the soul gone hand in hand with Satan in chace after carnal pleasures, till it has been even tired and then what fruits has it produced but sorrow and shame !

But, Sir in order to my deciphering the combined forces of sin, hell, and the world against me, you have justly opposed the threefold grand alliance that is for every believer, viz. *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*.—True ; but the query still remains, Can such a one as you be in alliance with the King of Heaven, or bear the image and stamp of the Lord Jesus ? Where is the consistency ? I want to know the worst of myself. I own a spark of real grace shall be kept alive ; let the wind of temptation blow ever so high and strong, or the waves of temptation beat ever so hard, true grace shall be victorious—this is a matter of comfort, to find a smoking ember under a load of ashes.

There may be, indeed, two men in one person, the *old* and the *new* man, flesh and spirit.* So upon a medal there may be on one side the image of the Devil, Rebellion, Slavery, Lust, and Tyranny; and on the other side the effigy of a good Prince, loyal Subjects, Peace and Plenty, and the enemies' hearts trampled upon as conquered. This I think a lively representation of the case; and it would be a happy turn, could I make it out so to my own soul

I want to see the divine image carved more legibly on my own heart.† I am sure I see the picture of the devil strong enough there. I do not so much fear the allied army of the prince of the world, and the world itself, under the command of its captain general, the devil, as I fear the rebellion in my own bowels, the restless monster, Sin, within me. Civil wars are

* Rom. vii. 15. 21. 22. 23. † Where there is true grace implanted in the heart, there will be desires for its increase.

the most shocking and the most fatal; besides, my soul is the seat of wars and conflicts; and you know, Sir, what havoc is usually made in such places.

I know all the powers of the enemies (let the devil call them invincible if he will) cannot harm me, were it not for *inbred* foes. It is the corruptions within me, not the contagion of commerce without me, which I fear, or the bloody armies around me; it is that unruly rebellious regiment of banditti within my heart, my lusts, appetites and passions, that I fear will destroy me.* It is I that infect myself; and therefore it is my daily prayer, Lord, deliver me from myself. This is always a part of my litany, and sometimes the first voice of my retired ejaculations.

Indeed, Sir, this is an unnatural rebellion, to be in arms and in conjunction with one's own inveterate foes,

* A Christian's worst enemies are those of his own house.

who are aiming at my heart's blood What, fight against myself? Yes, so it is; flesh against spirit; the unrenewed against the renewed; sin against grace. Indeed I have proclaimed war in the name of the King of Heaven, against the States-General of Hell (so far as it is in league with Satan) and against the potentate of sin; but to tell you the times how often I have been foiled and beat, or raised the siege, or been wounded, or had a limb shot off, or been trepanned, or taken prisoner, I know not; but I can never sign a truce, and I am determined through grace, if I die to die sword in hand.

I must own I have sent out a hue and cry many times after the traitors and have sometimes hoped I had secured some of them. I have had them in prison and in fetters, perhaps for weeks and months together, and they have been brought out to several courts of judicature, particularly the

court of *conscience*, but that is partial. There have been bribes at times, and not sufficient chastisement; but at other times there have been very severe rebukes, and conscience has condemned the vassals to run the gauntlet with Horror, Doubt, and Despair. The charges of the court of conscience have been read aloud; terrible peals have been rung, and the chains of hell have rattled in the ear.

Though sometimes conscience has given the verdict on the side of Grace, at other times there has been an arrest of judgment, and a citation before the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench of Heaven; and though the wretch deserves no hearing, as being outlawed, yet, to the honour of the grace and mercy of the Sovereign, the criminal is brought to the bar, and though there is no room to say any thing but guilty! yet every plea that can be made in his favour is heard;* now they were drawn in by some of

* See Bunyan's Holy War.

the clans of hell—perhaps forced, as it were, against the settled judgment of the soul; and perhaps through weakness and infirmity, could not get out of the way, or from ignorance of the crime, or from extenuation of the guilt, or from being hurried away into the service of the invader, without so much as giving time for a cool thought. And sometimes the poor soul has been like a galley slave, wishing for deliverance from the bond of corruption, and crying out of the load and fetters of sin, and saying with him of old, *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.**

The high court of judicature hears particularly the relenting groan; and the Attorney-General of Heaven has compassion enough to put in a petitionary plea for the guilty wretch whose hand is still upon the bar. But the dead warrant is come down from heaven for the execution of sin, and

* Ps. cxlii. 7.

all the heads of the clans of hell. *Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth, fornication, &c.** so if an eye or hand offend thee, cut it off.

A reprieve at last has been issued out for the soul; and the repenting rebel has gone again in pursuit of those invaders of the peace and court of grace, and the soul has laid hold of some of them, and cried out afresh for justice and revenge against these traitors in his own breast, and has laid the sacrificing knife to the throat of these brats of hell. But how often have they raised up their seemingly dying heads when on the very block, and asked for pity! and during the very execution have done much mischief, and made me bleed and groan afresh

I hope at times they are crucifying; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and I find they have still life,

* Coloss. iii. 5.

which, with the help of Satan, their grand ally, they too often discover, and break out again; and all I can do is, to cry out, Murder! Murder! to the Lord Jesus.* I may truly call them murderers, for they often destroy my peace and comfort. I long to see them dead, dead, dead! I desire your prayers for the poor wounded, but

Your affectionate humble Servant, &c.

* Happy for us! when indwelling sin drives us to a throne of grace, to sue for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in every time of need; well assured that praying breath shall never be spent in vain.

LETTER III.

To the Rev. Mr. B.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER having been so free already as to disclose to you the secrets of my heart, you will not think it strange if I subjoin a *third* letter There is one point more that deserves animadverting upon, and that is, *speculative* sins, which I believe are too often overlooked by many professors, or at least very superficially regarded. If it does not amount to an outward act, it is too often passed over with silence; but truly I think there may be a committing adultery in the *heart*.* So the statute law of Heaven runs: It is out of the *heart* proceeds all evil.† The seeds of it are sown there, and it takes root and grows, blossoms, buds,

* Matt. v. 28. † Mark vii. 21.

and brings forth fruit in the soul, and no eye but Omniscience sees it.

How often have speculative evils been acted in the heart! The heart has been both the adulterer and adulteress. Sin has been begotten, nursed, and bred up, and acted its part upon the theatre of the heart How often have sinful objects been represented to the fancy by speculation? Do I speak the experience of others, or only my own? The heart can bring forth, dress up, and act the part of any thing; and there has not only been an interview, but an intercourse and sinful familiarity.

There has been many a mortal blow given by revenge in the *heart*. This is *speculative* murder;* and there has been coveting a neighbour's estate, &c. and what is this but speculative robbery?

* God looks upon our intentions in the same light as actions, tho' we may not have an opportunity of putting them into practice.

So spiritual pride shews itself in many branches. When I have been enlarged in prayer, how has pride and the devil clapped me on the back, and said, Well done ! you have been very great to-day. How abominable is this, to attribute an enlarged frame, in any respect, to self ! How often have I been pleased with flowery words and fluency in prayer, more than spirituality ! Again, how often have worldly objects and creature-comforts been set up in the heart ; and have not the affections too frequently bowed down to them ? or when a near relation, or a beloved pratling child it may be, have been called away by the superior Owner, how often has the heart whispered, and the tongue been ready to blab out, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more ? What is this but speculative idolatry ?

How have pride and covetousness worked themselves up sometimes into

a coach and six ; aye, into a palace*! Really, Sir, I am ashamed of these masquerades. The heart will turn into any shape. Well may it be said to be *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* This is still a black picture ; but in a distant prospect. I sometimes hope at the closing hour, when I shall exchange worlds, Jesus will help me to lay hold of every sinful serpent that has long twisted round my soul, and keeps me company all my pilgrimage ; and enable me, by the hand of Faith, to hold them up†, crying out, Behold the head of traitors which shall never come to life again ! Oh ! what a joyful shout shall I give when I shall feel these vermin drop off.

* Pride and covetousness have no bounds ; the more they have, the more they want.

† By faith the Christian is enabled to conquer every foe, and shall at death come off *more* than a conqueror. Rom. viii. 37.

At times I am ready to hope the gloomy territories of the grave are almost ready for me, that I may lay down this body of sin upon the block for everlasting execution. Oh! when shall these clogs and fetters be knocked off, and the dark and gloomy walks of this vale of tears turned into bright and peaceful realms?

Dear Sir, these have been black letters for your aspiring soul to read; though I do not question but you have found something of these combats yourself, and therefore can pity and sympathise with a poor weak, wounded, shall I call myself *brother* soldier. You have your enemies, I doubt not, and can trample upon them. I congratulate you on your victory (though not yet a *complete* conquest) through the Captain of your salvation. I would fain bear a part in shouting salvation and honour, glory and power, to the conquering Saviour*. He

* Revelations, v. 13.

rode triumphantly to glory, after he had obtained a complete conquest over Sin, Death, and Hell, and dragged the monster at his chariot wheels: He then gave Satan such a blow that he has not recovered since, nor never will.

From hence I fetch all my hope. If ever I am saved, it will be, I am well assured, by mere grace, and almighty all conquering power*. Alas! what has such a depraved, polluted, and corrupted miscreant as I to reckon upon, why mercy and grace should be exerted in my salvation, but free, rich, sovereign grace? This will be the topic of the eternal songs of redeemed souls. And what, Sir, if such a poor, weak, weather-beaten, tost, tempted, and almost shipwrecked vessel as I, should, at last, land safely on the shore of everlasting rest? sure you would strike up a new song to see *me* harbour in the heavenly port—if you are there before me. And what, if

* Ephesians, ii. 8.

such a poor, weak stripling as I should come off conqueror; and more than so, over an armada of enemies, from sin, death, and hell? And what if you should meet me in the peaceful realms above, with my robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and a palm of victory in my hand?

Perhaps you may know me by my scars; but even every one of these will be a set off to the freeness, sovereignty, and unchangeableness, of the love of God; the worth and efficacy of the dear Redeemer's merits; and the power and prevalency of the almighty and ever blessed Spirit.—The burden of my song will be, *Grace! Grace!** if ever I reach the heights of Zion.

I bless the Lord, since the first essay I wrote to you, I have found some new recruits from the inexhaustible magazine; the brave General has got the field, and is keeping off the enemy, and I trust has given a

* Eph. i. 6.

renewed blow to all the confederate troops that are in league against me; and I firmly believe I shall be an overcomer through the blood of the Lamb. As I have experienced some special advantage from the study of the old man and all his cursed artillery, with the powers of the infernal kingdom, and this world with all its bewitching sweets, I would earnestly recommend soul-study, devil study, and the snares of the world study, to every Christian friend. Commune with your own heart daily;* beware of Satan's devices; and be ever on the watch, lest you enter into temptation: For though the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak.†

But it may be, dear Sir, while I have been giving you some of the living sorrows of my heart, I have ripped it open (in order to examine the entrails of the soul) with more free-

* Psalm iv 14.
† Matt. xxvi. 41.

lom than you have met with before; but either I have a worse heart than any other, or there are many counterparts in the experience of others. Indeed I sometimes think I am by myself; and if ever I get to heaven, I shall be truly a *wonder* there*; I shall be as an eternal monument set up to the honour of divine grace, and the inscription upon me will be this; A black hellish brand plucked out of the burning, now made, through rich mercy, a pillar, to stand for ever in the temple of God.

Wishing you the prosperous gales of the Divine Spirit, and all success in your sacred work,

I am, dear Sir, sincerely and repeatedly,

Your's, &c.

* Psalm lxxi. 7

LETTER IV.

A consolatory letter to a christian friend under sore trouble.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE been lately much hurried; or, according to your desire, I should have wrote before: but, however, agreeable to my promise, I have endeavoured to send you a few lines, which I shall be thankful and rejoice, if they are blessed of God to your support and comfort under your present troubles.

I desire to be sensible of my own unworthiness, and unfitness for any thing of myself, that is spiritually good; much more for so hard and difficult a task as the administering effectual consolation to a soul that groans under outward afflictions and

outward troubles; that is tossed upon the waves of Satan's temptations and wordly disappointments. Indeed this is the work of none other than the Divine Spirit:* it is he alone that can command a calm into a tempestuous soul, and speak peace, rest, and satisfaction, in the greatest multitude of perplexities.

However, I desire most tenderly to sympathise with you, remembering that I also am, in the body, subject to the same adversaries and trials, and would help you, all I can, to bear your burden with faith, patience and resignation.

I grant then that your circumstances are very intricate and exercising; but let me beg of you not to construe your afflictions as a token of God's displeasure, or a sign of your not belonging to him. That is an old tempt-

* He is styled the *comforter* by our blessed Lord himself, John xiv. 26.

ation of Satan's, with which he often assaults the afflicted Christian; but take the shield of faith, that you may quench the fiery darts of Satan.

Alas! crosses and afflictions are the common lot of the people of God in this world. Our Lord has told us, we shall meet with tribulation. Every saint has his own particular difficulty, temptation, and conflict to grapple with * We have need to be emptied from vessel to vessel. We are too apt to settle on our lees, too apt to be taken with the vanities of this passing world. If we are without afflictions, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards and not sons.

How many have questioned the

* No real Christian is without a cross of one kind or another, either outward or inward; well, therefore may the poet say,

"Shall Simon bear his cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for *thee*."

truth of their state and relation to God, for want of these exercises and trials! Where are the cause and matter of your fears and despondency? Go search the records of sacred Scripture; and see how it fared with saints in all ages; what Job, David, and Paul, yea, our blessed Lord himself endured and passed through in this world. Should that be an argument against your interest in God, which is the common portion of all believers here? We are now chastened, that hereafter we may not be condemned.

Ah happy afflictions! that wean us from this wretched dying world; are a means to mortify our corruptions; teach us to live more constantly by faith on Jesus Christ; and to fix all our hopes and expectations on another and better world!—and for that end, you should be earnest in your wrestling with God in prayer, that your trials may be all sanctified unto you; that however, at present, they are not joy-

ous but grievous, yet hereafter they may yield you the peaceable fruits of righteousness, according to God's gracious promise, Hebrews, xii. 11.

Sanctified afflictions are a thousand times rather to be chosen than unsanctified prosperity; these may consist with, yea, are often the effects of God's special love;* he sees we want them, and he knows that they will work for our good. Do then Lord what thou pleasest with me. so I may but die to this world, overcome my corruptions, live more upon Christ, bring more glory to his name, and have more comfortable tastes and pledges of his love, and be often saying, the will of the Lord be done.

He is infinitely wise, and knows what is best for me; he is infinitely gracious, and will be tender of the weakest of his children; he is infinite

* It is the declaration of God himself *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten,* Revelations, iii. 19. Hebrews, xii. 6, 7, 8.

ly sovereign, and may do what he pleases with his own; the heaviest afflictions, on this side hell, are less, far less, than mine iniquities have deserved.*

O boundless grace! the chastening rod of a reconciled Father might have been the flaming sword of an avenging Judge. I might now have been weeping and wailing with devils and damned spirits in hell. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him. t is of his mercy alone that I am not consumed; and, O my soul! it is but a little while, and there will be an eternal end of all thy sorrows, fears, trials, and disappointments; yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; that Heavenly Bridegroom who has, by his Spirit, betrothed thee to himself, will, ere long, invite thee into his eternal kingdom, where thou

* The awakened sinner esteems all he meets with, short of hell, *mercy*.

wilt forget the storms and tempests clouds and darkness, in thy passage through this wilderness world; and all shall be joy and peace, love and praise.

No doubts and fears shall ever assault thee in that happy state; but thou shalt dwell eternally under the immediate shinings of divine love, and shalt sing with the strongest believers yea, the highest and most glorious archangel in heaven, the wondrous mystery of redeeming grace: and the comforts and blessedness of that state of rest will be more brightened, illustrated, and endeared by all thy tears and sighings here below * The remembrance of the gall and wormwood of affliction will tend to sweeten the taste of heavenly enjoyments.

I pray that God may be with you support and comfort you with the di

* The more obstinate the contest, the more glorious the victory; the more dangerous the voyage, the more welcome the port the heavier the cross, the brighter the crown

vine consolations of his Holy Spirit, and establish you in his own due time. He is a faithful God ;* a God keeping covenant, and therefore will not lay upon you more than he will enable you to bear.† If you have less of this world, may you have more of his comfortable presence. O blessed exchange ! And if he seems to be hiding his reconciled countenance, and suffering Satan to buffet you, may you be supported with his everlasting arms, and have him to sustain and uphold you in every time of need.

Should you want his comfortable presence, if it be ever thus with you, remember it was so with your once dying, but now exalted Redeemer ;‡ and is the servant greater than his Lord ? shall we not joyfully tread in his steps, that we may at last be where

* Deuteronomy, vii. 9.
† 1 Corinthians, x. 13.
‡ Mark, xv. 34.

he is ?* can, or ought we to repine, if God deals with us as he did with his own well-beloved Son ? the Lord help thee willingly to submit to him ; and doubt not, but at the appointed time, when he sees it will be for your good, and his own glory, your heavenly Father will find you out a way to escape ; he is never at a loss to bring about his gracious designs, when once his set time is come ; and you should rejoice to think that he is carrying on the great work of your eternal salvation, amidst all your troubles and disappointments, and under all your outward and difficult pressures.

Oh say then with Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him ;†—though I am weak in grace, yet I will adore him for the smallest hope ;—though I am surrounded with terrors, I will bless him that I am out of hell ; He that has begun a good work in my soul, will

* Hebrews, x. 34.
† Job, xiii. 15.

see it perfected.* Lord, I desire to submit unto thy will; do what thou wilt with me, so that I may but bring honour to thy name, and promote my own everlasting welfare.

May you find more of this faith and patience, hope and resignation, growing and increasing in you every day; and when once you are brought to this humble submission, and resigned temper; to this hoping, believing, waiting, and contented frame, you may be assured deliverance is at hand, even at the very door.†

And now, Oh that you may be embraced in the arms of everlasting love, and enjoy the comforts of your pardoned state! the Lord increase your faith;‡ take from your burdens or add to your strength; and let me beg of you, once

* "Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes. *Watts.*

† Luke xiv. 11. ‡ Luke, xvii. 5.

more, dear sister, not to suffer the dis appointments and crosses of this world however sore and trying in themselves to drive from your mind the frequen and joyful forethought of what free rich, and distinguishing grace, has de signed for you in a bright and bette world; and is fitting and preparing you for, every day you live.

Let not the hardships of your jour ney make you forget, but rather long for your home. Oh! think on that heaven which neither sin, nor death nor hell, shall ever be able to deprive you of; in which you and I, through sovereign grace, I trust, shall spend the endless ages of a blessed eternity.

I remain, dear Madam,

Your's &c.

LETTER V.

To the Countess of H.

MADAM,

THURSDAY last I received a bill conveyed by Mr. ——, but presented by your ladyship, which was immediately converted into cloth for the use of lay preachers, and for their donations. I send you my hearty thanks; the Lord has promised to return it an hundred-fold into your bosom, and I believe you can trust him.

I wish you had sent along with it a few minutes of your life of faith; you might then have taught me, whilst you were clothing others; for, indeed I am one of those strange folks who setup for journey-men without knowing their business, and offer many precious wares to sale without understanding their full value. I have got a Mas-

ter, too, a most extraordinary person, whom I am supposed to be well acquainted with, because he employs me as a riding pedlar, to serve near *forty* shops in the country, besides my own parish; yet I know much less of my Master than I do of his wares.

Often is my tongue describing him as the fairest of men, whilst my heart is painting him as the witch of Endor; and many big words I have spoken of his credit, yea, I am often beseeching others to trust him with their all—whilst my own heart has been afraid to trust him with a groat. Neither, Madam, is this all; such a profound ignoramus I am, that I know nothing of myself as I ought to know.* I have often mistaken rank pride for deep humility, and workings of self-love for the love of Jesus.

* Self-knowledge is only to be attained in the school of Christ; the more we know of him, the better we shall know ourselves.

When my master first hired me into his service, he kept a brave table, and was wondrous free of his liquor; scarce a meal passed without roast meat and claret; then my heart said, I love Jesus, and was ready to boast of it too; but at length he ordered his table to be spread with meat from above, and water out of the rock*. This my saucy stomach could not brook, my heart thought it pernicious fare, and my tongue said it was light food. Now my love for Jesus disappeared, and I followed him only for the loaves and fishes; and, like a true worlding loved his larder much better than his person.

Presently my Master detected me in a very dirty trick, which discovered the huge pride and amazing impudence of my heart. Hitherto I had been a stranger to the livery my master gives his servants, only I knew he had many rarities, such as pearls and

* 1 Corinthians, x. 3. 4.

diamonds, and plenty to dispose of.*

Accordingly I begged a bracelet of him, a necklace, ear-rings, nose-bob, and other pretty things, which he readily parted with, being of a most exceeding generous nature; and will it not amaze you to hear. I had the vanity to fix these odd ornaments about my old face, intending to make a birthday suit to appear in at court?

Well, to be sure, while I was thus busy about mending my old rags, and putting on my pearls, &c. in comes my Master, and gives me a sudden grin, which went to the very heart of me and said in an angry tone, "Varle, follow me." I arose and followed him trembling, whilst he led me to the house of correction,† where he first set my feet in the stocks, and stripped me of my ornaments; he then took his afflictive rods, and laid

* Revelations, iii. 18. † Proverbs, iii. 12.

upon me very stoutly, till I cried for mercy; but he declared, he would not lay aside the rod till he had scourged every rag from my back;* and, indeed, he was as good as his word.

Think, then, how amazed and confounded I must be, to stand *naked* before him; and especially when I saw myself a leper, with an Ethiopian skin,† which the rags had hitherto concealed from my sight.

I kept on my legs, though overwhelmed with shame, till at length, being almost choaked with the dust and stench that came out of my rags in beating, I fell down at my master's feet. Immediately the rod dropt from his hand‡, his countenance softened, and with a small still voice he bid me look up. I did; and then I got a first

* Isaiah, i. 25. † Isaiah, i. 6.

‡ When the rod of affliction has had its proper and appointed effect, it will assuredly be removed from the real Christian.

sight of his robe, the garment of salvation*.

Truly, Madam, it was a lovely sight; a charming robe, reaching from the shoulder down to the feet, well adapted for covering and defence, yea, excellent for beauty and glory† — "There, prodigal Jack (he said,) put this on thy back, and then thou mayest shame even an angel; it was wrought with my own hand, and dyed in my own blood; wear it, and then embrace me" I thanked him, and bowed.—

But, Madam, I must tell you, though I do not desire you to be a confidant, when my Master opened his robe, he gave me a hasty glance of his person; it was divinely sweet and glorious, and withal so exceedingly humane, that I fell in love; and now would you think it of me, an old fool as I am, and swarthy as a negro,‡ nothing would content me but a wed-

* Isaiah, lxi. 10. † Exodus, xxviii. 2. 40
‡ Solomon's Song, i. 5. 6.

ding*; nay, I have often proposed the match to my Master, who sometimes replies,——"when you can leave all others I will take you." The other day, having asked him when he would take me to his bosom, he answered, "when I could humbly lay at his feet," and then he has also graciously promised to set open his cellar and larder, and to keep them open for me†.

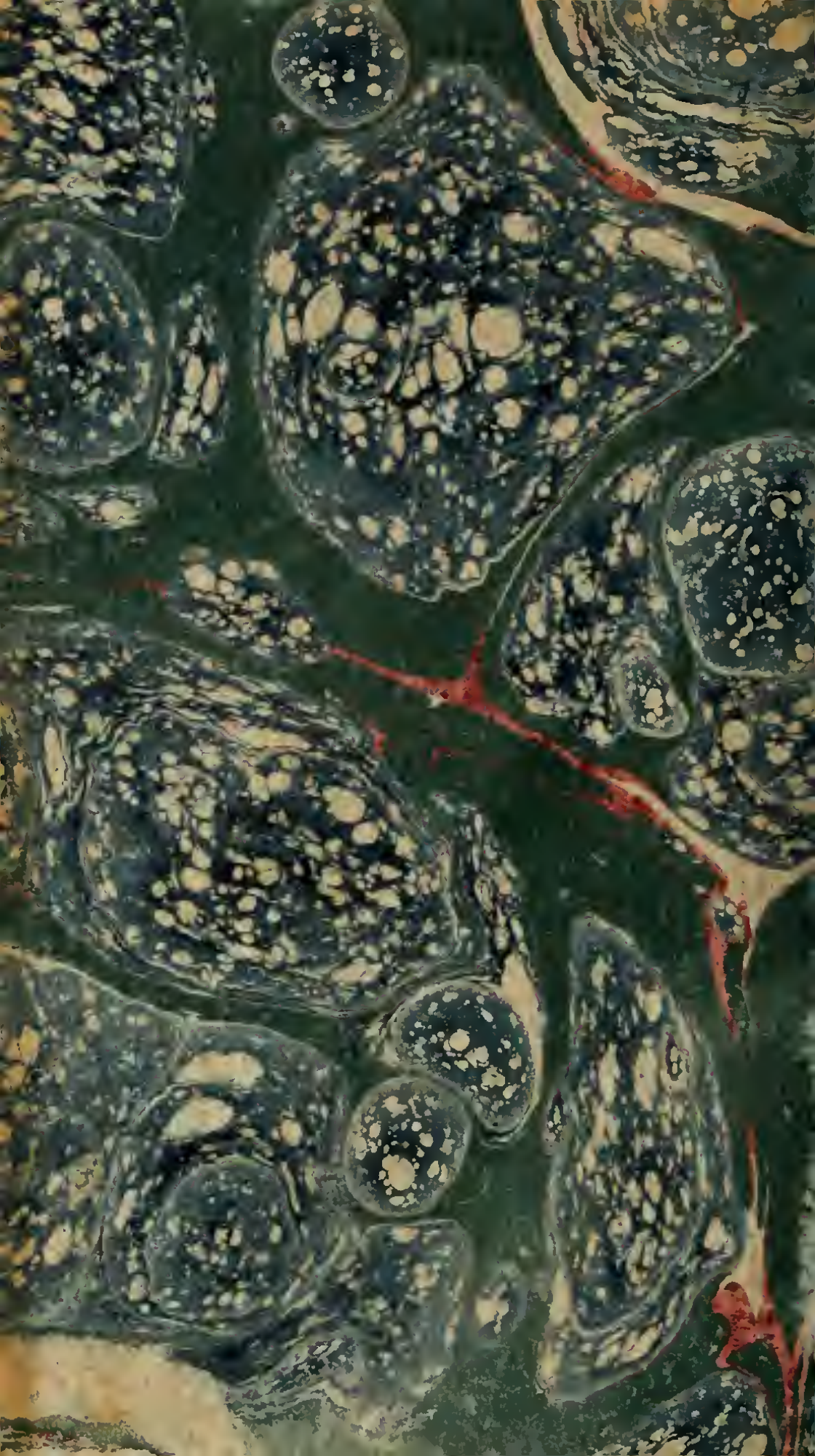
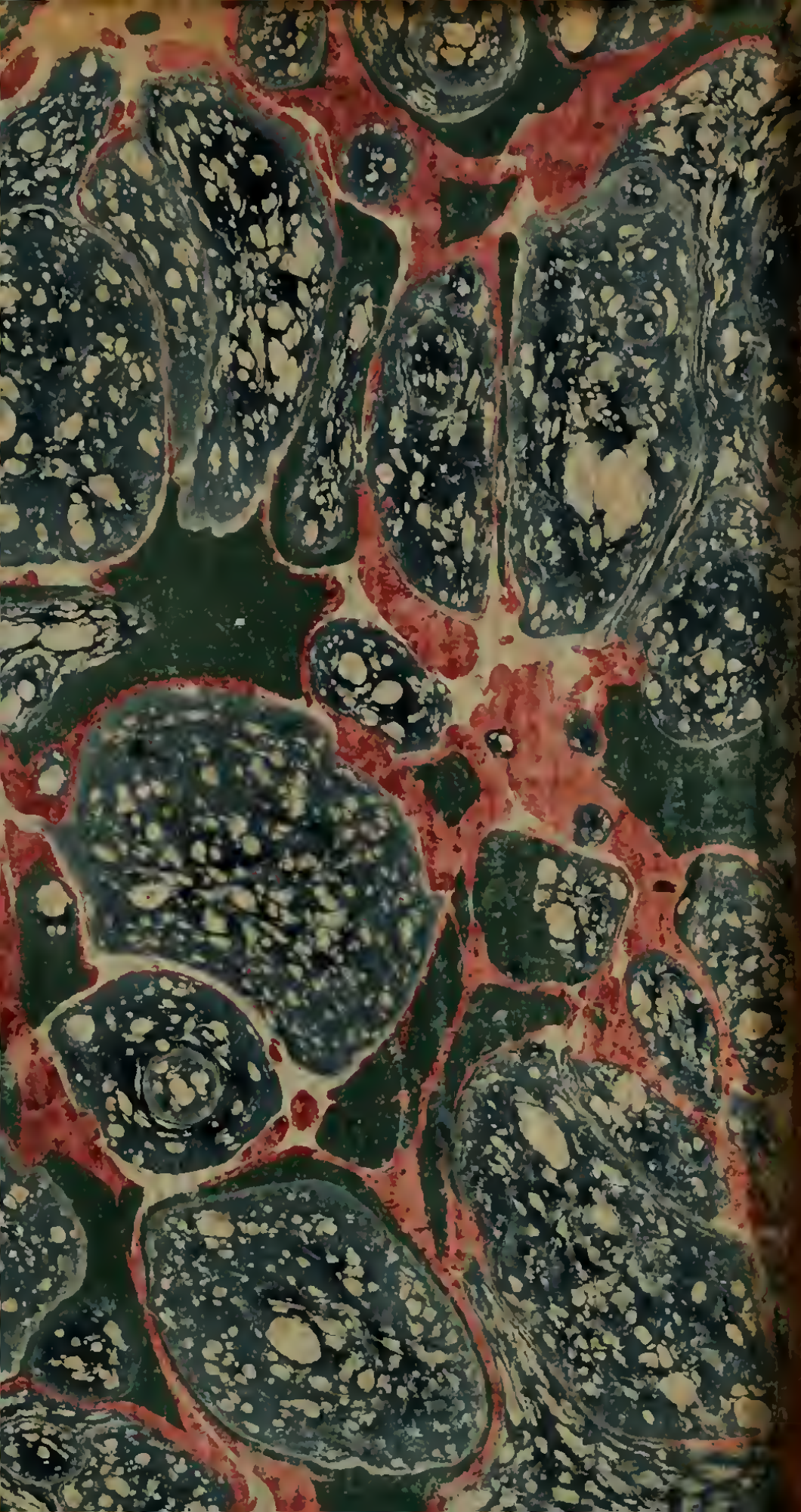
I am now removed out of the book of *Proverbs*, which I have long studied, into the book of *Canticles*: but am got no further than the first chapter, verse the second; "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.*" I seem to want nothing now but a close communion with the dear Redeemer. The world, at times, strives to divert my attention from the chief object of my affections; but my soul is ever panting

* Jeremiah, iii. 14.

† Isaiah, xxxiii. 16. Matthew, v. 6. Philippians, iv. 19.

after him, yea, my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.* *Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.*

The Lord strengthen your union and communion with the Prince of Peace.—Amen.

* Psalm xlii. 1, 2.

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